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December 16, 1974

Dr. Leon Weiss
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Dear Leon,

I certainly enjoyed our visit and now want to thank you for sending me the material under cover of your letter dated December 5.

I was fascinated by your talk on the university medical center and the undergraduate college. But I have only one question really about your curricular proposal - and that is related to the fact from my own sad experience that you and I may really not be the best models for the construction of curricula for large numbers of contemporary students. I think there is indeed a number but a very limited number of students who would profit immensely by being able to start some of their medical courses quite early in their career. This may be analogous to my own situation in that I jumped into graduate work at Columbia as a freshman and waited to do my studies in letters until I was a senior and in certain respects more mature and better equipped to profit from them. But I would hardly advocate that as a universal pattern! Well, you may say it won't be universal, we will simply leave that as an option but then we have to face up to how to solve the problem of advice, guidance and selection. If we can do that, then I would be all for the kind of flexibility that you are advocating.

My reactions to the Madansky report are in a somewhat similar ~~domain~~ Yes, I agree that with careful selection of students and good teaching that courses in medical sciences can be used to teach science, and that one could then deal more efficiently with getting over the content that is now disbursed between pre-medical and medical studies. While I am more concerned about is the material that is relegated to the elective time, especially the social sciences - which is not to say that these are necessarily dealt with much better in the traditional four year pre-medical course. But I fear then, unless very special attention is given to the problem and a well structured framework is provided, that your graduates will be even more deficient in an understanding of economics, and of social and political process than is all too true today.

The public health sequence looks very exciting and I suppose I should be reading between the lines to find answers to the same kinds of questions I was just asking before. However, it does at least appear that the students will have a bit more time available to fill out their programs. Certainly,

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the medical school is conspicuous by its absence in the formal arrangements for this sequence, but I wonder whether or not it is still possible for students to take electives in the school of medicine in the course of their public health studies.

Well, here at Stanford we lack the possible advantage of an existing program in public health, but perhaps may be able to compensate for it by well established traditions of cooperation between the medical school and the rest of the university's activities.

I have no part to play in the deliberations of the search committee but will only express the hope that your own interest has not been dampened and that we will have an opportunity to exchange ideas - in directions that appear to be so highly convergent already - closer to hand.

Sincerely yours,

Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics

JL/rr